

LINKED TO A STAR.

IN making public the great sorrow of my life, I will speak briefly and plainly. No amplification, no graces of writing that I possess, can move the reader's compassion, if this unadorned narrative fails to. If any one asks why I come before the world with my sad story, I answer that I desire the world's sympathy. It relieves me to unbosom myself to the widest audience that will give me a hearing.

Once and for all, I do not believe in the supernatural explanation which some excellent people—most of them ladies—who personally knew of the occurrences here set down, attach to them. I hold them to be coincidences only. But upon me they have had an effect as controlling as if the Deity had made to me a special revelation. This is my candid statement, as I look back to the mysterious events, across the dreary interval of two and a half years.

I am, and have been for a long time, head book-keeper in a great dry-goods house in the city—a plain, matter-of-fact man, of whom I will say no more here than that the gray which thickly studs my hair is not a mark of age, but of disappointment and grief.

I live where I was born, in a hallowed old house, about twenty miles up the river. Trains run to and from the city many times a day, so that my home is quite as convenient to business as a residence in town. My mother and two sisters occupy this house with me. It has fair grounds about it and some noble old trees, and commands a distant view of the river. The outlook from the roof is very fine. You can see for miles in every direction. At night, owing to the high altitude and the purity of the air, such an expanse of dark-blue sky, fretted with myriads of golden fires, overhangs us, as I have never seen save out upon the Sound.

Among my father's effects was a six-foot achromatic telescope of Fraunhofer's make—an old instrument which had strayed across the Atlantic after a life of unknown vicissitudes, and got into an auction-shop in the city, where my father chanced to see it, and bought it to look at remote objects with, principally at sails far up and down the river. Its performance, for a land telescope, was unequalled by any instrument I have ever seen. Names of schooners, sloops, and barges, could easily be made out, eight to ten miles off. But it was in astronomical observations that I, as boy and man, tested its remarkable powers most thoroughly, and derived the greatest pleasure from its use. The possession of this glass made of me an amateur astronomer. Other people find a hobby in chess, or billiards, or Shakespeare, or philosophy, or a hot-house. My amusement, on returning from the dull mechanics of book-keeping every night to my country home, was to bring out the battered brass-and-leather tube as soon as dark set in, and con the heavens. I rebuilt the cupola of our house into a sort of an astronomical observatory, by heightening and widening it so as to allow the free swing of my long telescope, and putting on a light movable roof, which could be slid off and back again by the pull of a cord. The sides were a mass of windows, so contrived that I could lower them at pleasure into the roof beneath me, out of the way. In this airy loft, long after the other members of my family had gone to bed, have I spent hours that spun by like minutes, so lost was I in the ecstatic contemplation of celestial wonders. Many a night have I watched in the morning-star, and made up for loss of sleep by naps in the cars. Occasionally I have been found nodding on my high stool in the office, and then there were sly jokes about where I had been the night before. I never let out the secret of my observatory but to a few of my most intimate city acquaintance: for there was a general disposition, I soon discovered, to make fun of my innocent nocturnal pursuits. Several of my dearest friends called me "highly eccentric;" and one, whose good opinion I greatly valued, did not hesitate to pronounce me "moonstruck."

For two years previous to May, 1866—memorable year and month in my history—I had been engaged to Milly Estwick, the only daughter of a neighbor of ours. From childhood we had known and loved each other. Ours was the first love, which sometimes is the true love, the love that outlasts all. She was a handsome girl, sweetly disposed, and, in quiet, simple, home-loving tastes, much resembled me. We should have married soon after I put the golden pledge upon her dear hand, but for the delicate state of her health. She was a slender creature, having in excess that spiritual organization so often found in American girls. Manlike, I was anxious to wed at once, and be off on a journey for her health and pleasure. Womanlike, she preferred to wait.

Much of our courtship was carried on in the open air, beneath

the pavilion of stars. It was the poetry of heaven that moved me first to the point of proposing; and the eternal, countless eyes above us witnessed the sweet registry of our mutual vows. Many a pleasant summer evening, after our betrothal, would she sit with me for hours in my observatory, and watch for transient meteors, or look through the telescope at objects which I would select, the moons of Jupiter, Saturn's ring and satellites, binary stars, nebulae, and the like. The glass was mounted on an ingenious frame, of my own contrivance, and while we sat side by side, very close, in our easy-chairs, I could turn the instrument, with the merest finger-touch, to any quarter of the skies. For both of us it was heaven above and heaven below.

Milly took but little interest in astronomy as a science. She said it made her head ache to think of the stupendous size and vast distances of the heavenly orbs. She feared, too, to detach her mind from thoughts of the pleasant earth, where she had so many devoted friends, whose love and tenderness were but the reflex of her own soft and loving nature. The stars appealed somewhat to her religious sensibilities. But she admired them most—let me say it at once—for the same reason that swayed the minds of the wisest and best in the olden times, and even now has not been banished, and perhaps never will be, by the decrees of knowledge. She believed the stars had some influence on mortal affairs. She thought they might be the homes of our future lives. This notion, so poetical and beautiful, although I thought it absurd, I did not try to laugh out of her. Nor to disprove it—as how could I have done? No! I loved her all the more for her childish superstitions.

On the night of May 11, 1866, Milly and I were up in the cupola. My mother and sisters had been with us the greater part of the evening, but had withdrawn to the parlor, on some plausible pretext or other, but really, I dare say, to leave Milly and me together. Since we were engaged, they had often benevolently done this.

The night was mild and beautiful. A south wind brought to us the odor of blossoms. The first wood-cricket of the season chirped on every side. There was no moon; but the light of a multitude of stars, on the steel-blue ground of sky, made outlines of objects near me quite visible. I could see, or thought I could, the violet of Milly's sweet eyes; the deep chestnut of her hair; the little dimples in her cheeks. She was paler than usual that night. I knew, by her little nervous thrills, that she suffered from some internal pain. But in vain I asked her to join my mother and sisters below. She said she was very comfortable there, and would stay a while longer. We had been roving idly among the stars, and chatting a good deal about ourselves, though there was one topic very near to both of us, which, by common consent, we never alluded to. That was my darling's heart-affection. Neither of us dared to talk of it. We both silently hoped that the dangerous symptoms which it had shown would disappear in good time. That malady was the spectre, as from the grave, that rose between us often in our gayest moments.

I folded her shawl more closely about her, for I somehow fancied she was chilled with the night air. Then said I, with a light laugh, and a Claude Melnotte-ish air, "Come now, Milly, tell me 'what star shall be our home, when love itself becomes immortal.'"

"Are you in earnest, Albert?" said Milly, more seriously than I had expected.

"Of course, darling. Only let it be one of the first magnitude. No second-class for you and me in cars, hotels, or stars. There are Aldebaran, Regulus, Arcturus, Capella, Denebola, Lyra, and plenty more of them. Which, now?"

Milly glanced about the heavens a few moments. Her gaze suddenly became fixed on the beautiful constellation Corona, then looming in the northeastern sky. Her face seemed to light up with a look of decision, as she exclaimed: "There, that's our star!"

Her small white hand indicated the glittering Crown.

We were so used to pointing out stars to each other, that I knew instantly which she meant.

"I see it, dear. The one with the soft white light, changing a little as I look at it to a faint yellow, and perhaps a blue. 'Tis only of a second magnitude. I am disappointed."

"Nevertheless, Albert, 'tis our star. What is its name?"

I looked at the star attentively, taking its bearings from other well-known stars in the vicinity. "This is very strange, Milly," said I, "but I don't remember ever seeing that star before. 'Tis a fixed star, you see, by its sharp, flickering light; not a planet or a tailless comet. How does it happen, then, after all my studying of the heavens and

Herschel's catalogue, till I thought I had both by heart, that I can't name that star?"

"Perhaps it's a new star," said Milly, still gazing at it intently.

"Impossible," I laughingly replied. "We can't have new stars made for us expressly, you know. Yet it may be new in one sense," I added, more seriously, "that is, a variable star, reappearing after years of obscuration. I will look at the catalogue when we go downstairs. Meanwhile we'll call it new, and we'll christen it '*Milly*,' your star."

"Our star, Albert."

I was about to respond with some pleasant jest, when I marked a deepening pallor, like a faint auroral cloud, pass over her face.

Star and telescope were forgotten in an instant. The phantom rose between us! "Darling," said I, "you are ill. I knew this night air would hurt you. Let us descend."

Her eyes were still fixed, rapt upon the soft, white star. I was obliged to take her gently by the arms, and move her to the trap-door, whence a safe flight of steps led to the attic. She obeyed me silently, like one in a trance; but, to the last, before we had passed through the roof, her backward gaze rested upon that star.

By the time we joined my mother and sisters in the parlor, she was better. "Only a passing faintness," she said. In a little while she recovered her usual spirits; and I accompanied her home to her father's house, which was but a stone's throw from us. As we went into the open air, I rejoiced to see that a fleecy cloud covered the Northern Crown, for I felt there were mysterious reasons why we should not look at that constellation. She glanced up at the sky, but said nothing.

I gave her the parting kiss at her father's door—how sweet it comes back to my memory!—and hastened home, and up to the roof, with a lantern and Herschel's catalogue in hand, to solve the riddle of the star. But clouds had gathered for the night, and after waiting fully three hours for some rift to open up through which I might have glimpses of the Crown and of "*Milly*" (as I fondly called the unknown), I took in my telescope and went to bed. But long I lay awake, pondering perplexedly, sadly, over the strange incident of the evening.

Next day, my thoughts so ran on the star and my betrothed—for the two came into my head together, as if they were inseparable—that I made several mistakes in the ledger. May 12, 1866, is scored with more penknife scratches in my accounts than any other whole month of that year.

At last—how slow time dragged, and how snail-like the cars crept up the Hudson shore!—at last I was at home again. On my way to the house I always called on Milly. That evening (the sun had not yet gone down) she was sitting by an open window, where she often sat, looking right between two great lilac-trees, heavy with pink-white masses, watching for me. I ran to the window to greet her. Ah! how pale, but how beautiful! Her eyes had the introverted look of meditation. They did not seem to see me, but some point in space just short of me.

"You are not well, dear," said she, plaintively.

The very words I would have spoken to her! but I dared not utter them.

"Something has troubled you to-day, Albert. Our star, perhaps," she said, smiling, at the same time looking over the lilac-tops to the sky, where Corona would be in an hour.

I made a poor attempt to laugh. "Not much time to think about stars in town," said I. "The ledger is my only atlas there. One star more or less, where there are millions, is nothing to me, you know; but the mistake of a cent in balancing—that's every thing. I've been very busy to-day."

Then, to change the subject, I handed her a new volume of poetry, that I had bought for her. This effectually diverted her thoughts—or seemed to do so—from the unpleasant subject. I leaned over the window-sill, so that my cheek almost touched hers, and we turned the pages of the book together, glancing at the principal poems. One was headed "Lines to a Star." She paused, as if to read them.

"Let me show you a lovely ode further on," said I, and I thumbed a dozen pages impatiently. Milly looked up and smiled. But I pretended not to understand her. Presently I found what I wanted, and read the poem to her in a low monotone. What it was all about, I know not, at this time. My thoughts, all the while, were only of her and her namesake up in the sky.

The sun was then setting, and Milly, always thoughtful of others, said I must go home to supper, for mother and sisters were waiting for me.

I was less reluctant to leave her than usual, for I burned with a desire to solve that star-problem.

"Let me shut the window for you," said I.

"Oh, no, Albert! Leave it open." Again the skyward glance, as she spoke!

"Then, good-night, good-night, Milly. God bless you!" I kissed her hand, and hurried away, just as the twilight began to gloom softly.

Supper was dispatched mechanically. I chatted at random with mother and sisters. They knew that I was sad about Milly's declining health, and I knew that that made them unhappy. We shunned that subject of all others.

Almost rudely pushing my plate aside, I excused myself and ran up to the observatory. I carefully wiped the glasses of my telescope and placed it in position. In the chair which she was wont to occupy, I spread out Herschel's catalogue, its pages open at the Corona constellation. The lantern, newly filled and freshly trimmed, stood by its side, shedding a clear light upon the text. I seated myself, my hand resting on the drawn tube of the instrument and caressing it. I trembled with impatience as I strained my gaze to the northeastern sky. One by one the brightest stars in that region began to appear. Presently, under my fascinated eyes, the Crown came out, gemming the blue with its brilliant points; and, set in the midst of them, the soft, white star. The moment I could identify it beyond a doubt, I turned to Herschel, as to a book of fate.

Great Heavens! There was no such star upon the list!

The import of the mystery flashed upon me like the gleam of a meteor. *Milly had discovered a new star.*

Truly, it was our star, as she had said—ours by right of finding. We were entitled to name it. The star was *Milly*, as regularly christened as ever child brought to font.

Let me be frank. For the first time in my life a feeling of superstitious awe crept over me. Was there more in the old astrology than credulity and imposture? But I did not allow this unscientific thought to keep ascendant long. I recalled all I knew of stars suddenly appearing, of variable stars, in Ophiuchus, in Scorpio, in Cassiopeia, Hercules, and other constellations. I remembered the theories that explained the prodigy, and gradually became calmer. We had made a great discovery surely; but dozens of other observers might have made it the same night, for aught we knew. Accident only had determined Milly's selection of that particular star. Its light, rather softer and purer than that of other stars in the neighborhood, had guided her choice. I felt proud for Milly and myself, but I laughed outright as I thought of the poor child's simplicity. The idea of a star, billions of miles away, being any earth-born creature's future home! The delicious absurdity of it made me love Milly all the more. "What is the darling doing now, I wonder?"

My blood suddenly chilled in my veins as I thought, "*She is at this moment looking at our star.*"

Mastering with an effort this mysterious and unpleasant fancy, I addressed myself to the scientific examination of the star, so far as I, a mere amateur, was capable of such a task. By this time the night was quite dark, and I now discovered that the star was not so brilliant as it had been the night before. From a full second magnitude, it had dropped at least half-way to a third. My experience in studying stars enabled me to detect this to a certainty. It was strange, but, after all, in accordance with the phenomena of recorded variables. Their brilliancy culminates and wanes in many cases with surprising rapidity. We had first seen it at its maximum; it was now on the decline. The flicker into a yellowish and bluish tint was noticeable, as on the night of the 11th. Some stupendous chemical action going on. Possibly, the burning out of the star! Who knows?

I levelled my telescope at this wonderful object. Like all other fixed stars seen through clear glasses, it became apparently smaller than when viewed by the naked eye—a diamond-point only. But the color coming and going on the white was distinctly visible.

How long I sat at this scrutiny, I cannot tell. The voice of sister Hetty from the stairs called me back to earth.

"A note from Mrs. Estwick, Albert."

I seized it as she thrust it through the opening in the roof, tore away the envelope, and read:

"DEAR ALBERT,—Milly wants to see you very much. Come over at once.
Affectionately yours,

"S. E."

I presented myself at Mr. Estwick's house as quickly as I could. Milly sat by the window, shut now, where I had left her. Her face was turned toward the northeastern sky. She did not see me as I approached through the darkness. A thick-set figure came out of the house as I was about to enter. I recognized Dr. Plimpton, the family physician.

"How is she, doctor?" I asked, hurriedly.

"Ah! Mr. Champfield, I'm glad you've come. You'll do her more good than all my medicines. She fainted to-night—though that is nothing new for her, you know—but she came out of it rather weaker than usual. Strange diseases, sir, those affections of the heart. The patients' nervous sensibility and spiritual perception are wonderfully increased. I sometimes think they have the power of looking into the world we call unseen, upon whose threshold they always stand—"

I cut short the doctor's disquisition—"Tell me, can she be saved?" I clasped his honest right hand, as if I would wring a favorable answer from him.

"I hope so; but God only knows. You can save her, if any one can."

Without another word, I rushed into the house, and the good doctor walked off to visit another patient.

"Ah! Albert, I am so glad to see you," Milly said, extending both hands to me. I clasped and kissed them.

Mr. and Mrs. Estwick, who loved me like their own son, gave me a warm greeting, and, after a few commonplace remarks, left Milly and me together.

The moment we were alone, the dear girl said: "Our star has faded a little from its lustre, last night, and I have faded too." She smiled, and looked up at it. "We are going out together."

I recalled what Dr. Plimpton had just said, and a sense of terror thrilled me. But I conjured up a feeble laugh, and replied: "Oh, no, darling! that's mere fancy. If you had seen the star from my observatory, you would have said it was brighter than on yesterday night."

Heaven pardon me the deception, but what would I not have done for her!

She had watched my eyes closely as I spoke. "Now I know you are just fibbing a little bit," she, smiling, said. "Don't fear to tell me the truth, Albert. Our star is becoming fainter."

I could not lie as I looked into her pure, loving eyes. "Well, Milly, it has dwindled a little, perhaps. But what of it? The star is a variable, which we happen to have seen at its brightest. The light has been waxing up to the degree of last night—its maximum, perhaps—and is now waning. You know, dear, I told you all about this strange kind of stars long ago. We cannot explain the phenomenon, but one thing we may be sure of, it has no influence, good or bad, on the inhabitants of this speck of a planet."

Milly answered not, but only looked out of the window. My eyes followed hers, and I gladly saw that Corona had at last passed from our field of vision.

"Is it really a new star, as you thought, Albert?"

"My catalogue does not give it," said I. "For us it is new, at any rate, though other observers may have seen it the same night that we did, or before it. These astronomical novelties are generally discovered by a number of people in different parts of the world about the same time. I will watch the scientific items in the papers, and see what they say. Till further notice, however, we will call the star 'MILLY.'"

I was sorry afterward that I said this, for her eyes shone with strange intensity as I coupled her name with the celestial stranger.

"As you watch this star fading from night to night, you will think of me, Albert, will you not?"

"Surely I will, dearest, and hope and pray that you will become stronger and better. But leave the watching to me, Milly. Promise me that you will not worry any more about this star, will you?"

"I do not worry," she said, with her pleasant smile. "I take a calm, sweet pleasure in looking at it, for I know that you and I are linked to it forever. As long as I can sit at this window, I shall feel more contented and happy to see our star, and feel in my heart and soul that it is ours."

Morbid, incomprehensible fancy! Too deeply rooted in her mind to be disturbed by any arguments that I could ply upon her. Dr. Plimpton's words resounded in my ears. I felt sick at heart.

Thankful was I that, before this painful subject could be renewed, Mrs. Estwick entered the room. I accepted her appearance as a hint that our interview had lasted long enough, and a few minutes after I withdrew, promising to call morning and night, to see with my own eyes how fast Milly got better—a promise quite unnecessary, for I had called that often for about two years.

Blessed hope, that can cheat us against the conviction of our own senses! For I knew my Milly was dying.

I have no heart to protract this story.

Information which I gathered from many sources in various ways proved that Milly and I were probably the first persons anywhere who took notice of this star.

On the 12th of May, the night following our discovery (if I may so call it), the new star was seen and examined at the Washington Observatory; on the night of the 14th, at Cambridge, Mass. Astronomers in England and Ireland saw it on the 12th, and the next night some French astronomer made record of it. Reports were afloat that it had been seen in Canada and elsewhere during the early part of May, when its brightness was between the third and fourth magnitude; but these reports I am unable to verify. It further appeared that several maps and catalogues of old dates testified to the existence of a small star, below the ninth magnitude, at or near the position occupied by the mysterious object; but there was no evidence to show that the two were identical. While it may have been a star "burning up," as the popular phrase is, the opinion of the majority of astronomers inclines to the belief that it was a variable, seen in its highest effulgence at intervals perhaps of hundreds of years, like the well-known one in Scorpio.

Night after night its lustre steadily and rapidly decreased. On the 14th, it was of the third magnitude, or below it. On the 19th, it was of the fifth.

These changes startled me only as they coincided, in the most remarkable manner, with Milly's declining health. As the star diminished, so the roundness of her fair cheeks fell away, her sweet voice became fainter; only the brightness of her violet eyes seemed undimmed, or even to be heightened, as she faded.

I attended to my dull work in the city as best I could—reaching the end of my labors every night through Heaven knows what tangles of mistakes—and hurried home by the first evening train.

The star being visible up to the night of May 19th to the naked eye, I did not use my telescope upon it. I had no taste for astronomy during those dreadful days. I came at last to curse the star, because of its malign influence upon my fate—though my sober reflection always rejected that supposition as weak and unworthy of me. But, reason as I would, the mournful fact remained that Milly and the star were receding from me together.

Morning and evening I was by her side. She was still able to sit up; and occupied her chair in the old place by the window. The good doctor had reluctantly told me there was no hope for her recovery; that the least excitement, even that attending her removal from room to room, might at any moment end her frail life. Her father and mother had not dared to ask of the doctor his final opinion, and they still trusted, with blind confidence, that she would mend in a few days. Milly herself would not talk of her approaching death to them or to me; but I knew by a hundred little signs and tokens, voiceless many of them, that she wished me to be prepared for the event that must come. Knowing that every allusion to the star pained me, because of its intimate association in my mind with her, she had not spoken of it to me for some days. She had seen, with her own eyes, that its radiance was fast being quenched.

On the morning of the 20th, a thought occurred to me from which I derived momentary relief. I had observed, on the night of the 19th, that the star verged so closely on invisibility that another twenty-four hours would remove it from human sight. The idea possessed me that if she could be kept in ignorance of the disappearance of the star for a day or two after it had taken place, she would then have a clear proof that her life did not depend upon it. I determined to practise a harmless *ruse* upon her. I would deceive her for her good; perhaps save her life by dispelling what I believed to be a hallucination.

I had taken later trains than usual to town since her serious illness. That morning, when I presented myself at her house about half-past eight o'clock, I found her sitting in her accustomed chair and looking better. Her parents and even Dr. Plimpton also remarked the improvement; and we all took heart from it.

"Milly," said I, as soon as we were alone, putting on a brazen face for the deceit, "I've good news for you. Your star is brightening. There was a perceptible increase in its lustre between ten and two o'clock last night. And you are brighter too, thank Heaven!"

The effect on the dear girl was not what I had expected. She simply said, "You must not be deceived by appearances."

But I would not listen to any thing that would dash the joyous hope which rose within me. "This star has begun to shine out again, and so will you, dearest. I know it."

Though decidedly improved to the eye, I noticed that conversation and the exertion of thinking fatigued her that morning to a marked degree. So, after dispensing what I could of my assumed cheerfulness to the patient, and telling her how much better yet I was sure of finding her when I came home that night, I bade her farewell.

We were alone at that sacred moment; and I stooped down and printed the kiss of immortal love upon her lips.

"Good-by, Albert," said she, pressing my hand, as if desirous to detain me longer. But this she always did.

"Good-by, sweetest!" and so I retired from the room, her violet eyes bending upon me to the last their angelic look.

"Now," thought I, as I walked fast to the station, "if Heaven will but send a storm of three or four days, so that she cannot see the star! At all events, on one pretext or another—and love will find many for me—she must be kept from seeing it. All the time, if the nights are clear, I will make her believe that I have watched it, and that it is flaming out more and more. Then, after her health has improved a little, I will frankly acknowledge the deceit, and so explode forever the deadly illusion that haunts her."

Such was my poor plan; and the elaboration of it, in all its parts, cheered my drooping spirits at the desk, where I went through my appointed work like an automatic adding-machine.

The sky was clear when I reached the little village that night. I almost ran from the station to Mr. Estwick's, turning over and over, as I dashed along, the various plans by which she might be kept from gazing at the star, and made to believe my pious frauds about it.

She was not at the window. That was ominous. And, through the panes, I could see a group of persons standing still together. She was worse—perhaps actually dying!

The dread doubt was solved in a moment as I knelt upon the floor by the sofa where she lay, cold and beautiful. *Dead, dead!*

I remember how all my manhood snapped like a thread under the awful tension; and how I wept as if my heart would literally break. I recall the well-meant condolences that relatives and friends, who stood about, addressed to me, and that each effort to soothe me touched a new fountain of tears. The last words of the poor child were "*Albert*," and "*our star*." She had died about five o'clock, suddenly and tranquilly—thank God for that! Her death had been, the doctor said, "A fading out, natural and painless."

The torrent of my grief finally spent itself, and I could look upon the face once so full of the fresh beauty of life—so lovely even in death—with something like composure. Years of my future would drag heavily; but they would end at last, and then we would be reunited in that world where is no more death, nor any sickness, nor any sorrow!

In our star! I rose upon an impulse and walked to the window. Darkness spread from point to point of the Northern Crown, like a pall hung upon golden nails. *Our star was no longer visible!*

"*I know that you and I are linked to it forever!*"

Such were her very words. Were they prophetic? or were these strange events only coincidences? to me it matters not. Explain them how I may, I feel that I am, from the very necessity of the case, linked to a star—a star now utterly withdrawn beyond the reaches of my telescope as of my mortal eyes. I cannot turn my glass to the sky at hours when that constellation is visible, without seeking the Crown and peering through it into the vast recesses beyond, in the faint hope that I may see the returning wanderer, my MILLY. Never again may that star shine on me in this fleshy tabernacle of mine; but the time will come—and this it is that cheers and sustains me—when, by my reunion with her, this burden of life shall be lifted, this mystery solved.

MAY EVENING.

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

THE breath of spring-time, at this twilight hour,
Comes through the gathering glooms,
And bears the stolen sweets of many a flower
Into my silent rooms.

Where hast thou wandered, gentle gale, to find
The perfumes thou dost bring?
By brooks, that through the wakening meadows wind,
Or brink of rushy spring?

Or woodside, where, in little companies,
The early wild flowers rise,
Or sheltered lawn, where, 'mid encircling trees,
May's warmest sunshine lies?

Now sleeps the humming-bird, that, in the sun,
Wandered from bloom to bloom;
Now, too, the weary bee, his day's work done,
Rests in his waxen room.

Now every hovering insect to his place
Beneath the leaves hath flown;
And, through the long night-hours, the flowery race
Are left to thee alone.

O'er the pale blossoms of the sassafras
And o'er the spice-bush spray,
Among the opening buds, thy breathings pass,
And come embalmed away.

Yet there is sadness in thy soft caress,
Wind of the blooming year!
The gentle presence, that was wont to bless
Thy coming, is not here.

Go, then; and yet I bid thee not repair,
Thy gathered sweets to shed,
Where pine and willow, in the evening air,
Sigh o'er the buried dead.

Pass on to homes where cheerful voices sound
And cheerful looks are cast,
And where thou wakest, in thine airy round,
No sorrow of the past.

And whisper, everywhere, that Earth renews
Her beautiful array,
Amid the darkness and the gathering dews,
For the return of day.

ABOUT WOMEN AND DRESS.

BY EUGENE BENSON.

EACH civilized epoch seems to have left us the husks of its taste in which to sheathe our softest flesh. The sweetest bud of Republicanism, the most *piquante* daughter of New England, the most dazzling dame of New York, promenades under such composite costumes, that we question whether she be infatuated with Chou Chou, Pompadour, or Eugénie.

Charming democrats we have in the women of the land. But how religiously they go out of it to seek their fashions! With what jealous reverence they shun the costume of the women of the Revolution, and how carefully they refrain from inventing or adopting a national and simple dress which we can look at without being reminded of the license, and corruption, and folly of Continental life!